

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6133

As of January 24, 2008

Title: An act relating to tuition setting authority.

Brief Description: Limiting tuition increases at state colleges and universities.

Sponsors: Senators Roach and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/23/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: Tuition rates at institutions of higher education are established by statute. Since 2003, changes in tuition rates for resident undergraduates are provided in the Omnibus Appropriations Act. In 2007, to help cover the cost of inflation in utility and other operating costs and program enhancements, the budget authorized resident undergraduate tuition increases of up to 7 percent per year at the two research universities, up to 5 percent per year at the four regional universities, and up to 2 percent per year at the community and technical colleges. For students, other than resident undergraduates, tuition rate increases and decreases are controlled by the institutions themselves since 2003.

Ohio, Maryland, and Montana froze tuition for the 2007-08 academic year. Kansas, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Georgia guarantee incoming freshman at public colleges that their tuition will not increase over the next four years.

Summary of Bill: Beginning with the 2007-08 academic year for new full-time students, tuition fees remain fixed at the rate in effect on the first day of enrollment. For returning full-time students, the rate is fixed at the rate in effect on the first day of the 2007-08 academic year. These rates may, however, be adjusted for annual inflation. If a student withdraws or transfers to a different institution, the rate is reset at the time of reenrollment. The rate is not reset if the break in enrollment is a result of a serious medical illness, personal injury, or military service. If a student continues on the graduate school, the rate is set on the student's first day of the first academic term in the graduate program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We need to make it easier for middle class students to go to college. Higher education is expensive and families sacrifice to provide this opportunity to their children. This provides predictability to students. This would allow students to plan ahead for costs.

OTHER: We need to keep tuition low, but we also need to make sure that colleges are sufficiently funded. Under this scheme, newer students would be subsidizing continuing students. The intent of the bill is good, but without increased funding from the state, colleges would be underfunded.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Roach, prime sponsor; Mary Alice Grobins, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Ashley Elliott, student at Eastern Washington University.

OTHER: Terry Teale, Council of Presidents.